WAIT! IT'S PROBABLY BOOBY-TRAPPED!
I SEE IT! AW GOD, CAP, IT'S GONNA BLOW!
NO! I'M LOSING MY GRIP!
DROP OFF, BUCKY!
LET GO!
I CAN'T! I'M STUCK!

S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier—
COLONEL FURY'S PRIVATE OFFICE--THIRTY MINUTES LATER
COLONEL, STEVE ROGERS IS ON SECURE ONE.
RIGHT, TERESA. PUT HIM THROUGH.
FURY HERE. WHAT'S--
SHARON'S BEEN CAPTURED.
I KNOW... I'VE GOT TEAMS COMBING THE STREETS FOR HER AS WE SPEAK.
DAMN IT, FURY, YOU SHOULD'VE TOLD ME.
NO. SOMEONE'S PULLING OUR STRINGS, ROGERS. EVER THINK THAT IT MIGHT BE EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANT, FOR YOU TO GO RUSHING IN BLIND?
I KNOW THEY DO...THEY SHOWED ME EXACTLY WHERE TO FIND HER.
WHAT? WHY THE HELL DIDN'T YOU SAY SO?
I CAN HAVE TEAMS IN PLACE IN TWO MINUTES. WHERE IS--
SORRY, NICK, I'D HAVE RADIOED IN EARLIER...BUT COMMUNICATIONS WERE OFFLINE AT TOP SPEED...
...ANYWAY, I'M HERE NOW. I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.
WAIT, CAP--THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW...
NO TIME, NICK--

--I'VE GOT A VISUAL. ROGERS OUT.
SNAK!

"--I THINK-- I THINK IT'S BUCKY!"
THEY'RE IN POSITION, GENERAL.
SHOULD I TAKE THE SHOT?
NO. REGARDLESS OF YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS, THAT IS NOT THE PLAN.
IT'S NOT ABOUT FEELINGS, SIR. THE MAN IS SIMPLY GOOD. HE'S GOING TO BE A PROBLEM.
I'M SURE HE WILL BE. BUT HE'LL SUFFER MUCH MORE BEFORE HE BECOMES OUR PROBLEM...
...AND THEN YOU'LL GET TO DEAL WITH HIM.
JUST COMPLETE THE MISSION. WE BROUGHT HIM HERE FOR A REASON, AFTER ALL.
YES, SIR, GENERAL LUKIN. CONSIDER IT DONE.
DEET

...DAMN IT...HOW COULD THEY HAVE MISSED THIS ALL THOSE YEARS?
COLONEL? ONE OF THE PHILADELPHIA TEAMS HAS FOUND SOMETHING...
THIS IS FURY, GO.
AGENT TAPPER HERE, SIR. GOT A BIG PROBLEM...WE MANAGED TO TRACK AGENT 13'S COMMUNICATOR--
--BUT THERE'S A BODY HERE. AND SOME KIND OF BOMB LIKE THE ONE IN YESTERDAY'S BRIEFING.
GET OUTTA THERE, TAPPER. NOW!
I THINK I CAN DISARM IT, SIR. I JUST--
DEET
OH, &%#^...
SSSHHHSSSHH
TAPPER!

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Welcome back. I'm sure after those last few scenes, you'll all have a LOT to say, so the next few months of letter columns should be very interesting. But let's get on with this month's letters before the flaming begins...

First off: Great run you have here (kudos to all). I'm totally glued to the pages and always left wondering what will happen next. The memory/past scenes are great, can't wait to see what is real and what isn't. Loved that you've touched on the replacement Caps (after the war) but in the near future will you highlight who revealed the government "cover-up" and that Cap indeed died in WWII? Sure would explain why everybody was really happy to see him when he was found by the Avengers.

You sure are trying to make us believe that Fred Davis is behind this all--he is the common thread between Caps II and III. I think you're throwing a red herring.

Second: Didn't you give away something in the text of the recap captions of the 2nd issue? Allow me to explain, quote: "a cybernetic assassin". Really? Can you point me in the direction of the panel in the first issue that was shown? All I remember was Skull getting shot, but it wasn't shown from where, and I brought this up because now in the fourth issue you're saying Jack Monroe has been brutally murdered by the same assassin. This is all news to me. I know the Russian general is involved but, again, a cybernetic assassin? My guess is Deathlok, but what do I know?

R. Cruz
(via e-mail)

On it being revealed about how the world knew that Cap had "died"--that is something we'll be dealing with in the next arc, actually. On your second point--We have been accused of being a little too subtle with our clues up until now, BUT, if you reread issue 1 closely, you'll see a figure floating in a tank in the opening scene, with a cybernetic arm and hand. In the last scene, after the Skull's been killed, you'll see that same cybernetic hand pick up the Cosmic Cube from the floor. You'll also see that same hand in the scene at the end of issue 3, where Jack Monroe gets killed. Gotta read our issues closely to pick up all the clues! Who said comics shouldn't be work?

And, now you know WHO that hand belongs to, but the story of how and why is what our next arc will concern.

I'm digging the whole "grand conspiracy" theme so far, and the flashbacks are keeping me reading between the other plot developments. If I have any gripes so far, and after four issues it's hard for great praise or condemnation, they are centered solely around the action sequences. Perhaps I should clarify: the lack of more action sequences! Great stuff, though I could do with more evidence of Cap's hand-to-hand skills. I will have to see a complete story arc from this team before I can say anything else, negative or positive, however. Tangent time: I hope Crossbones is the next to bite the bullet! That guy has been nothing but misery for Cap from day one. An interesting twist might be to have Cap cross the line and take the clown out himself...Well, keep up the good work and all that!

Jesse VDW
Rochester, MN

I know, when I see Steve Epting's art for the action sequences, I always wish I had more room for them, or that I could do a whole issue of nothing but action (maybe in the next arc, I will). Unfortunately, all those pesky little plot-lines need attending to. But I do try to make sure there's action in every issue, because Cap is an action hero. The best one out there, in my opinion.

Nomad's dead, Sharon Carter's been knocked out by one punch, and Captain America's lying on the ground having been humiliated by Crossbones. This isn't "Out of Time," this is "Out of This $%#!in' World!" Truly amazin' stuff!

This issue brought up many questions and mysteries. I am salivating for the next issue. Who's the Russian behind all of this? Who can get in close enough or has the telepathy to mess with Captain America's brain? Who has the knowledge of who wore the Captain America mantle before? So many questions and so little answers as I await another month in anticipation. You're all extremely cruel making me wait a month!

Twiddling My Thumbs,
Adam Schlagman
(via e-mail)

Well, of course, now most of your questions have been answered, but I hope a lot of new ones have just been asked. We are cruel, aren't we?

Mr. Brubaker,

I haven't read anything else that you've written. However, over the last four issues of CAPTAIN AMERICA, I have come to realize that that is a mistake on my part. You have taken my favorite character in the Marvel Universe and made him cool again. Cap is a very tough character to write. He needs three very important elements: history, humanity and pride. Over the past few years, I had come to believe that writing a great Cap story was impossible. I enjoyed Cap's past incarnations, but there was always something missing. The three elements were never completely there. It seemed as if Cap had one good story in him and that was the one involving Red Skull and the Cosmic Cube. Now, I stand corrected. You can write a great Cap story. Yes, Red Skull and the Cosmic Cube are involved, but that does not appear to be the crux of the story you are telling. Thank you. Now I have to go off and find some of your other stuff to read. And please, keep Red Skull dead!

Jens
South Pasadena, CA

Well, personally, I think Cap has a LOT of great stories in him. I chose to start with the Skull and the Cube because I want our book to be a synthesis of the old and the new, with a lot of twists thrown in for good measure. As a longtime Cap fan, it's a constant joy to be able to write this book, and to be given the freedom to really shake it up and get to the heart of what I always loved about the character.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: What was the first comic book you ever read?

Ed Brubaker: FANTASTIC FOUR #6, which I got among a stack of old comics passed on from my dad's friends on the Navy base, stuff their kids didn't want anymore. It had no cover.

Steve Epting: The first one I remember is AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #6, which reprinted the "Sinister Six" story from Spidey's first annual. Still one of my all-time favorites.

Frank D'Armata: First true comic was the *Transformers* movie adaptation, but even earlier I had the Spider-Man album with the Lizard that I played on the turntable

Molly Lazer: That would be FANTASTIC FOUR #5, read to me by my father when I was 5.

Andy Schmidt: My two older brothers had comics, so I don't know which comic was my first read. But my earliest memory was of what I presume to be an issue of WORLD'S FINEST in which Batman turns into a giant bat and was beating up Superman--I think.

Stephanie Moore: *Sandman* #32. Yeah, I know, I came late to this stuff.

Tom Brevoort: *Superman* #268, "Wild Weekend in Washington!", guest-starring Batgirl.

Hey guys...question for you--in Cap's last series, it was a big deal when he revealed his secret identity, yet I just learned that WAAAYYYYY back when in TALES OF SUSPENSE #95, Cap did the same thing. He gave up being Cap to pursue a normal life with his love, Agent 13, and revealed to the world that he was Steve Rogers. What gives?

Roman Horoszewski
Estero, FL

Not sure I understand the question. Like a lot of comics, Cap has gone through many incarnations, and many storylines have touched on the same elements of his history. Back then, Stan and Jack decided to have Cap go public and resign, then soon afterwards, he took back his Captain America identity, and a few years later, got his secret identity back, too. Then about twenty writers later, it was decided to have him go public with his identity again. Personally, I like it, because it makes him more like a public servant or something. Not that the average person would recognize Steve Rogers on the street, though, out of costume. So, it's not that big a deal, really.

I have always been a huge fan of Captain America. He is the greatest hero of them all. But after reading issue four, I was so disappointed in his portrayal. Cap has always symbolized that never-give-up attitude, and now what does he do? He gives up--he lays down for Crossbones. He looks like a baby in the fetal position. This is our symbol of being the best you can be? Of never giving up? Who is this guy? It's not Captain America, that's for sure. Not the one I grew up with and admired. He would never have given up. Whatever happened to that Captain America that made you swell with pride at the mere thought of him?

Richard Vasseur
London, Ontario, Canada

And this from a CANADIAN? Like Captain Canada never got his @$$ handed to him by a bad guy while having his mind assaulted by the Cosmic Cube at the same time... Oh wait. Seriously, though, Cap didn't give up, he just lost a fight. It's happened before, and under the circumstances, I think it's forgivable. Heck, he kicked some butt this issue, right?

That's all we've got space for, but keep those e-cards and letters coming, folks, and join us next month for a special interlude issue that takes a step back and details the last days and months of Jack Monroe.

Ed Brubaker

NEXT ISSUE:

THE LONESOME DEATH OF JACK MONROE

STEPHANIE MOORE & MOLLY LAZER
ASST. EDITORS

ANDY SCHMIDT
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

TOM BREVOORT
EDITOR

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF

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